

Cinemateket:

Polyester

Regi: John Waters
Manus: John Waters
Foto: David Insley
USA
1981

Medverkande: Divine, Tab Hunter, David Samson, Edith Massey, Mink Stole, Joni Ruth White, Mary Garlington, Ken King, Hans Kramm, Stiv Bators, Rick Breitenfeld, Michael Watson

Längd: 1 tim 26 min
engelska, utan text
Tillåten från 15 år
Kopiekälla: DCP, Park Cirkus
Svensk premiär: 1982-05-02

Produktionsuppgifterna är hämtade från: Filmdatabasen

”John Waters has done more to make tubby transvestites a staple of the cinema than any other director working today. He has also made a number of films, among them *Pink Flamingos* and *Desperate Living*, that even at the level of plot synopsis would leave large segments of an audience grossly offended.

Ordinarily, Mr. Waters is not everyone’s cup of tea – but *Polyester*[...] is not Mr. Waters’s ordinary movie. It’s a very funny one, with a hip, stylized humor that extends beyond the usual limitations of his outlook. This time, the comic vision is so controlled and steady that Mr. Waters need not rely so heavily on the grotesque touches that make his other films such perennial favorites on the weekend Midnight Movie circuit. Here’s one that can just as well be shown in the daytime.

The heroine of *Polyester* is Francine Fishpaw, played by Mr. Waters’s usual leading lady, Divine. Divine is, in fact, a hefty man, but he plays Francine as a highly entertaining caricature of someone ladylike, 1950’s style. Francine worries helplessly about household odors, and does her best to make sure her suburban house is furnished with all the velour, gilt and brightly colored plastic her family could want. *Polyester* is a movie that can get laughs out of a dinette set simply because it is a dinette set. The props, all through the movie but particularly in Francine’s lovely home, are priceless.

Francine has troubles with her family, because her husband runs a pornographic movie theater and her children are budding delinquents. Her daughter Lulu (Mary Garlington) is headed on the road to go-go dancing, and sneaks off to be with a boyfriend (Stiv Bators), who gives entirely new meaning to

the word slimy. Francine’s son Dexter (Ken King) has terrorized Baltimore as the mysterious Foot Stomper, sneaking up on women in shopping centers and having his way with them, from the ankle down. Francine is grief-stricken about all of this, and confides her woes to Cuddles, her best friend. Cuddles used to be a cleaning lady, until she inherited a lot of money. Now she wears tennis outfits, and says things like, ‘Oh, this house is just like Architectural Digest!’

Mr. Waters’s casting of Cuddles is indicative of his comic method, which is roughly the same technique employed by anyone who likes to dress up a pet parrot or poodle. Cuddles is played by Edith Massey, a large elderly woman with only five or six teeth, a completely amateurish way of reading her lines and gray hair that has been coaxed into a flip. Mr. Waters simply dressed Miss Massey in kilts, circle pins, monogrammed blouses or riding clothes, then has her exclaim, ‘God, I wish I lived in Connecticut!’

The kind of send-up lends itself to loutishness, but Mr. Waters handles it brightly enough to give it distinctive wit. He also peppers the film with more conventional sight gags, as when he has the nuns at a home for unwed mothers ordering the girls to go on a hayride in the middle of the night, in a rainstorm.

Divine, presiding over most of this, brings considerable sweetness to the role of Francine, wringing her hands in anguish and pining for Mr. Right. He eventually turns up in the form of Tab Hunter, who proves to be a funnier casting idea than he is a presence. Mr. Hunter seems not quite sure of what the rest of the cast is up to, and the other actors have a

snappy, straight-faced manner he can't match. Mr. Hunter is certainly endearing, though, for playing a man who runs an art-house drive-in, one with champagne and caviar at the refreshment stand and a Marguerite Duras triple bill on the screen. Divine, lovestruck and trying hard to please, is seen poring bewilderedly over a copy of Cahiers du Cinema.

One of the numerous things that makes *Polyester* fun is Odorama. At 10 different points in the movie, a number flashes on the screen and the viewer can consult a card that carries the appropriate smell – skunk, say, or sneakers. And Deborah Harry contributes perhaps the first set of song lyrics to contain the phrase 'French Provincial'."

Janet Maslin, *New York Times*, 29 maj 1981

Programblad: AA/ME

